



## GRAFTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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JOSEPH F. CONNORS, Ph.D.  
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

November 30, 2009

Ms. Christine Lynch  
Director of School Governance  
Massachusetts Department of Elementary  
And Secondary education  
75 Pleasant Street  
Malden, MA 02148

Dear Ms. Lynch:

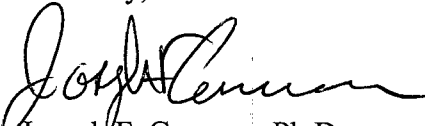
Enclosed please find general information about the current and the proposed program for Grafton High School.

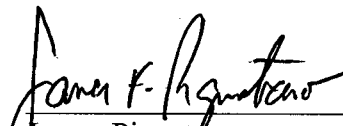
We have also included information relative to our participation in collaborative programs, alternative education and pre-school programs.

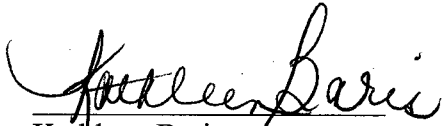
Grafton Public Schools is committed to provide high quality programs for students with disabilities. While our guiding philosophy is to service students in the least restrictive school environment we do provide a continuum of services. Given our overcrowding conditions we have been unable to house collaborative programs. We are a member of two area collaboratives and have established a working relationship with the Grafton Job Corps Career Technology Center.

Please contact us if you require any clarification of this information or any additional information.

Sincerely,

  
Joseph F. Connors, Ph.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

  
James Pignataro  
High School Principal

  
Kathleen Baris  
Director of Special Education

**Grafton Public School District**  
**Special Education Program Description**  
**December 2009**

**General Information:**

- a. Name of District: Grafton Public Schools
- b. Enrollment as of 10/1/2009: 2,902  
Projected enrollment as indicated by MSBA for 2017: 3,342  
(see enclosed chart)
- c. Total Grafton High School enrollment as of 10/1/2009: 656  
Projected high school enrollment: 900
- d. The grade range of the subject school will remain the same, 9-12

**Current Program:**

The Grafton Public Schools are committed to assisting students found eligible for special education by providing educational services in the least restrictive setting possible. Special education intervention is individually designed based on the child's specific needs as identified by the educational team. Through the District Curriculum Accommodation Plan, a comprehensive range of interventions and accommodations is available through regular education to all students. For those found eligible for Special Education, Grafton offers a full range of appropriate services within each school building, Preschool through grade 12. At the present time, Grafton Public Schools educates approximately 2,910 students, 531 of which qualify for Special Education. By developing strong, needs-based programs, the district demonstrates a commitment to our mission, *"to prepare all students to be life-long learners and responsible citizens. We provide an interactive learning environment that ensures academic excellence and social responsibility. Our instructional programs foster personal integrity and the critical thinking necessary for global citizenship. We empower our students to be active participants who thrive in an ever-changing world."* Commitment to inclusive education requires the strong, collaborative effort between administration and staff, as can be seen at all levels within the district.

**Inclusion**

It is our belief that, whenever possible, students should be educated in a general classroom. To that end, the Grafton Public Schools employs Special Education teachers and paraprofessionals to support students in the regular education environment. These individuals provide support in all programs, preschool through grade 12 and beyond. Inclusion is supported by special education staff working collaboratively with regular education teachers to support student success in the general classroom as well as through consultation. Strong communication and regular collaboration/consultation amongst staff insures that support is targeted to student needs as identified in the child's Individual Education Program (IEP).

## **Related Services**

Many of our students require related services to access a Free and Appropriate Public Education as described in the student's IEP. The District employs Speech/Language Pathologists, School Adjustment Counselors, School Psychologists, Nurses, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Teacher of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired, Behavior Specialist Coordinators and Behavior Learning Assistants (ABA Trained Staff) who provided related services to our students. In addition, the district contracts with local agencies and/or individuals to provide Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Orientation & Mobility. Related services may be provided through inclusion or as pull out sessions depending on the need determined by the team.

## **Consultation**

Consultation services are provided on an as needed basis to all students. For many students, regular consultation services are identified in their IEP's. Some children require substantial consultation by a wide variety of professionals. These needs are variable and determined by the student's educational team. Our commitment to educating children with complex needs is reflected in the time that our professionals dedicate to plan effectively for these students. Some examples of consultation services (in addition to related service consultation) provided to students in Grafton include Educational Audiology and Assistive Technology.

## **Language-Based and Pull Out/Resource Room Support**

Students requiring more intensive services are recommended for academic instruction in either a Language-Based classroom or in a small group "pull out" classroom in Grades K through 12. This is provided for students who have difficulty accessing the general curriculum in one or more areas and whose plan indicates a need for instruction in a separate setting. In some circumstances, students attend inclusion classes and receive pull out services to reinforce skills learned in the inclusion setting. This is referred to as academic support. These services are available throughout each building in the district.

## **District Programs**

Students who require a substantial amount of their services delivered in a pull out setting and who require intensive coordination of services can be educated in one of the following district programs.

- ***Integrated Preschool Program***

At the early childhood level, the district maintains commitment to the practice of early intervening. We have developed and grown our Integrated Pre-school Program, currently serving 49 students with disabilities in two locations. One of our most significant service continuum accomplishments has been creating a small, specially designed program for students with cochlear implants. Housed in the North Grafton Elementary School, this state of the art, acoustically sound classroom currently serves two students with cochlear implants along side four typically developing peers. The program is staffed with a Teacher of the Deaf, a part-time aide, and specially trained Speech Pathologist, employing an oral-deaf instructional approach.

There are a total of 5 preschool classrooms under the administration of the North Grafton Elementary School. Three of these classrooms are housed at the Preschool Annex located in the Central Office Building. There, students attend morning or afternoon sessions, four days per week. Two classrooms are located in the North Grafton Elementary School building. Both are one, half day session, four days per week (one being the aforementioned program for students with Cochlear Implants). All preschool programs are integrated, meaning that they have a balanced ratio of typical students with special needs students. We currently serve a total of 49 students with special needs in our preschool programs with a capacity to serve 56. Students are referred and evaluated throughout the school year for participation in this program. Within the integrated preschool program, the district provides related services such as ABA, Vision, Occupational and Physical Therapy, Speech and Language Services, and Nursing. Students may receive extended day services at the recommendation of the educational team to address intensive special needs.

- ***Early Elementary Language Based Classrooms***

The district provides language-based services, grades K-2 through two language-based classrooms at North Grafton Elementary School and one classroom at South Grafton Elementary School. These programs address the needs of children who have moderate to severe disabilities whose needs cannot be met in a more inclusive setting. These classrooms allow for the student to be included with his/her peers to the greatest extent possible, depending on the student's progress and needs. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

- ***Elementary Language-Based Classrooms***

This program addresses the needs of children who have moderate to severe multiple disabilities that cannot be met in a more inclusive setting at the Grafton Elementary School. We have two grade 3-5 classrooms where students receive a program that allows for varying levels of inclusion dependent upon the individual student's needs and progress. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

- ***Middle School Language- Based Classrooms***

Two language-based classrooms are located at the Grafton Middle serving students in Grades 6-8. These programs address the needs of children who have moderate to severe disabilities that cannot be met in a more inclusive setting. The program that allows for varying levels of inclusion dependent upon the individual student's needs and progress. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

- ***Middle School Therapeutic Program***

This program addresses the needs of children who have mild to significant emotional or therapeutic needs that cannot be met in a more inclusive setting. The model is established on an inclusive practice where students will receive services depending on their needs each day. All students have a regular schedule of classes and may receive supports in inclusion or in a pull-out within the therapeutic classroom, depending on the daily individual student's needs and progress. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

- ***High School Language Based Classroom***

We currently have one language-based classroom located at the Grafton High School serving students in Grades 9-12. This program addresses the needs of children who have moderate to severe disabilities that cannot be met in a more inclusive setting. The program allows for varying levels of inclusion dependent upon the individual student's needs and progress. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

- ***High Skills Life Skills, School to Work and Behavior Learning Classroom***

The Life Skills program is located at the Grafton High School. This program is divided into three areas: Life Skills, Behavior Learning and School to Work. The program currently takes up two classrooms and a small office within the high school building. Students in this program have moderate to severe disabilities that cannot be met in a more inclusive setting. Specialized instruction including ABA support services, are provided to address the unique needs of the individual student as well as to prepare students in their transition from school to post-secondary life. This program allows for varying levels of inclusion depending on the individual student's needs and progress. As students mature, and their needs change, they progress from Life Skills to the School to Work Program. All students are actively involved in the life of the school and surrounding communities.

- ***High School Therapeutic Program - ACHIEVE***

During the current school year, the district designed a new program for at risk high school students with and without special needs. This program, referred to as ACHIEVE, is an inclusive program offering academic and therapeutic support to students who may be at risk for academic failure or dropping out, as well as those with significant emotional or therapeutic needs. The program includes a special needs teacher, an instructional assistant and school adjustment counselor. Students attend regular or resource room classes and attend an academic support block where services are provided. In addition, students receive after school support and participate in community service projects. All students are actively involved in the life of the school.

## **Support Services**

The Grafton Public Schools has responded to the growth of low-incidence populations, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders, and has created a broad, diverse continuum of services, allowing for the provision of special education services in the least restrictive setting. This is clearly one of our strongest attributes. An example of this program development within the Grafton Public Schools can be found in our Behavioral Learning Programs for students with ASD and learning disabilities, Preschool through grade 12. Due to the growing population of students with Autism, highly trained staff, including Special Education Teachers and Behavioral Learning Specialists, have been utilizing research-based techniques for improving outcomes for students with autism. Such interventions are employed in substantially separate (language-based), partial inclusion and full inclusion settings.

The district has been responsive to students who are deaf/hearing impaired as well as visually impaired, maintaining their participation in inclusive settings by implementing consultation and specialized accommodations. Currently, a third grade student with cochlear implants and an eighth grade student with blindness, are receiving significant support services with specialists such as a Teacher of the Deaf, an FM system that compliments cochlear implants, a Braille Room housing Braille books and resources, O & M (orientation and mobility) services as well as TVI (Teacher of the Visually Impaired) services. This current eighth grade student will move up to the high school for the 2010-2011 school year and preparations are currently underway to support this student's needs in that setting.

## **Proposed Program:**

### ***Programs that will continue:***

The full range of services including inclusion, related Services, consultation, and pull out, will continue to be provided district-wide. At the high school, we will continue to support the current programs indicated above including a Language-Based classroom, Life Skills program, Behavioral Learning Services, School to Work, inclusion and resource room support.

### ***Programs that will be eliminated:***

There are no plans to eliminate any special education programs at the high school.

### ***Programs that will be enhanced:***

We are currently working on a pilot program for a Co-teaching model in special education with the goal of increasing the level of inclusive education. This year the district created the model in the English department and assessment of this program has shown it to be highly successful. Our plan will be to expand this model to three other core curricular areas (Math, History and Science) during the next school year.

We expect to serve a steady number of students in special education in the next 3-5 years. We currently have approximately 112 students in grades 9-12 who are eligible for services. Increased space will allow us to maintain and expand our Life Skills program, particularly in the area of vocational preparation and independent living/activities of daily living skill development. The new space will allow us to provide more appropriately sized classrooms and therapy areas, counseling and academic support space. Students will be able to be work 1:1 or in small groups in spaces convenient to their general education classrooms with specialists such as Behavior Consultant, Teacher of the Visually Impaired, Counselors, and Orientation & Mobility Specialist. This assists in allowing more students to be educated in the Least Restrictive Environment. Additionally, dedicated space for a Braille Room will be essentially to continue support for student with visual impairments. Dedicated evaluation areas as well as space for team meetings and conferences will be a tremendous enhancement. Pending the recommendation of our current Assistive Technology Program Evaluation, dedicated space for an AT lab may be recommended and could potentially be supported in the new building.

The district has had deficiencies in the existing program in that there has not been adequate space to house the required services. This has also impacted our ability to offer a broader continuum of services.

Grafton's most recent Coordinated Program Review took place in February 2009. The team found eight areas that were "partially implemented" and no areas that were "not implemented". Partial Implementation was noted in the following areas: SE 20 Least restrictive program selected, SE 22IEP implementation and availability, SE 29 Communications are in English and primary language of the home, SE 32 Parent Advisory Council for Special Education, SE 34 Continuum of Services, SE 46 Procedures for Suspension of students with disabilities, SE 48 Equal opportunity to participate in educational, non-educational, extra-curricular and ancillary programs, as well as participation in regular education, and SE 55 Special Education facilities and classrooms. SE 55 specifically relates to the Proposed Project in that the findings showed that the space provided for special education students in substantially separate environments at the high school who receive PT, OT and SL in the classroom do not have sufficient space or privacy for these services. Also at the high school, resource rooms for special education students are segregated into a particular wing, where all classrooms and other educational spaces in that corridor are reserved for use by special education students.

The District has responded to the DESE on each of these issues through a Corrective Action Plan that is currently in process. We have made adjustments and changes to the location of special education programs within the current high school. Special education classes are now integrated with each core curricular area. In addition, additional space was provided to the Life Skills Program to bring the program into physical compliance. This move, while necessary to be in compliance with SE 55 "Facilities", has resulted in space limitations in other areas of the current high school building. Our corrective action for SE 34 "Continuum of Services" required the special education department at the existing high school to develop a program for students with social/emotional disabilities. This program has been worked into a rotating "academic support" and there is no dedicated space due to existing space limitations. While we are able to address the therapeutic needs of students through this model, the space provided at the current time is not adequate. With respect to the Proposed Project, the acquisition of a new building will provide adequate space for all current programs as well as our plans for expansion in special education.

The local review process leading to the decision as to the type and location of special education spaces within the proposed building included consultation with faculty, parents and architectural consultants to ensure accessibility as well as adequate programmatic space to meet our current and enhanced special education programs. Additionally, the information obtained from the Coordinated Program Review was instrumental in the reallocation of special education programs in an integrated format within the current and proposed building.

The District is dedicated to providing appropriate space for all of our students. We remain committed to providing a Free and Appropriate Public Education for all of our special needs students in the Least Restrictive Environment. Placement of the special education spaces throughout the building will help to make that a reality.

## **Specialized Programs**

The District currently is a member of two educational collaborative programs: Blackstone Valley Educational Collaborative and Southern Worcester County Educational Collaborative. Grafton is highly committed to serving students in-district. Currently, we have only 16 of our 531 special education students educated in out of district settings. This percentage is far below the state rate for out of district placements. Success in this area can be attributed to the level of service currently offered in-district and the monitoring of these students by a Placement Specialist employed by the district.

We currently have a total of 5 students placed within the Southern Worcester County Educational Collaborative programs, grades 5-12. Given our low participation and the ability for SWCEC to maintain placements in their current schools which are more geographically appealing to the other members, the District does not currently house any collaborative programs nor do we have any plans to move in that direction. The Blackstone Valley Educational Collaborative does not currently have any specialized programs although the participating districts collaborate on the potential for future programs, particularly in the area of transition and vocational training. The district would be open to consideration of utilizing space for joint projects with our participating districts in the Blackstone Valley.

At this time the district does not have an alternative high school program and does not have current plans to establish an alternative high school program. The district has an integrated Preschool program as described above; however the district has no plans to house this program within the proposed building.

## **Programs with other private or public entities**

The District has many relationships with the community, both private and public. There are many cooperative ventures; however, none of these currently impacts the matter of the Proposed Project.

# MSBA Enrollment Projection - Grafton

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
1993	129	149	162	172	182	158	173	177	148	121	107	107	1,901
1994	198	137	149	166	184	166	161	173	174	104	107	89	1,918
1995	171	209	141	152	164	183	167	162	170	121	100	99	1,932
1996	217	186	215	147	154	170	177	165	161	135	100	102	2,036
1997	195	214	179	211	141	155	171	179	162	139	105	102	2,048
1998	204	204	204	187	214	139	144	182	175	153	113	105	2,126
1999	174	213	204	212	189	211	149	142	193	161	136	111	2,197
2000	167	184	212	195	207	177	204	132	154	169	137	132	2,174
2001	189	177	191	201	197	391	0	209	131	145	152	122	2,219
2002	123	197	193	197	212	194	207	178	200	126	120	144	2,215
2003	221	215	210	201	202	220	190	206	174	183	114	118	2,385
2004	201	242	208	212	196	210	213	177	201	171	180	111	2,437
2005	238	220	252	216	221	206	209	216	185	190	156	176	2,593
2006	222	245	225	259	219	236	203	206	220	173	196	151	2,730
2007	217	250	252	229	259	226	236	207	207	193	156	187	2,766
2008	239	264	256	259	232	271	223	233	208	193	183	152	2,892
2009	235	257	267	260	257	240	266	217	233	191	175	176	2,922
2010	252	253	260	271	259	267	236	258	216	214	174	169	3,000
2011	250	272	255	264	269	268	262	229	258	199	195	168	3,054
2012	206	305	279	262	267	282	265	259	230	240	188	189	3,133
2013	204	250	312	286	265	279	278	262	260	214	227	183	3,203
2014	202	248	257	321	289	277	275	275	263	242	203	221	3,249
2015	200	246	254	264	324	303	273	272	276	245	229	197	3,296
2016	203	244	252	261	267	339	298	270	273	257	232	223	3,309
2017	205	247	250	259	264	279	334	295	271	254	243	225	3,342

Projection generated using the following information:

Ratio used: 5 year 25th percentile cohort survival 2009-2011, otherwise 5 year average